

Washington, DC –Congresswoman Betty McCollum (MN-04) questioned Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius yesterday about health care reform during a hearing by the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services. Congresswoman McCollum emphasized greater support for women's health care services, bolstering the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), avoiding inequity in Medicare reimbursement for states like Minnesota, and spoke out forcefully regarding the murder of Kansas physician Dr. George Tiller.

McCollum Condemns Murder of Kansas Doctor and Urges HHS Secretary to Continue Support for Women's Health Care Needs:

"On Sunday, an assassination took place in your home state of Kansas. A physician was murdered in an act of terrorism in his church. This act of anti-abortion vigilantism inspires fear and terror. The murdered doctor had previously been shot and the clinic in which he worked had been previously bombed.

"I support a woman's right to make her own health care decisions and the work of courageous health care providers to meet women's health care needs. What America witnessed on Sunday was a Taliban like tactic to prevent abortions by murdering a doctor. It is terrorism and I urge the administration to extend protection to women's clinics all across our country.

"Madam Secretary, I support comprehensive sex education, evidence based science, full access to family planning and reproductive health care for all women, and counseling to ensure women of all ages have the best information to make good choices about when they decide to have children. This is how we reduce abortions. This is how we empower individuals to prevent the need for abortions."

McCollum Encourages Sec. Sebelius to Prioritize SCHIP as Key Component of Health Care Reform:

"As we reform our health care system, we need to remember that no population stands to gain more from national health reform than children. Currently, children insured by Medicaid and CHIP are covered by 50 different state programs with varying eligibility and non-uniform covered benefits. A child's access to health care coverage and health care should not vary by location.

"How does the federal government ensure that its most important investment--the investment in the health of its children--be standardized in terms of uniform eligibility, a national pediatric benefit set, and access to pediatric specialists for medically necessary care?"

McCollum Asks Sec. Sebelius to Craft Provisions to Avoid Regional Inequities in Medicare Reimbursement for States Like Minnesota:

"You have made improving the quality of care a priority for health care reform. Currently, regional inequities in Medicare reimbursement have created barriers to care and have penalized states where the quality of care exceeds the national average. These "low-cost, high-quality" states, like Minnesota, are doing everything the Medicare program could ask of them to deliver services in a cost-effective manner, yet they have been hammered for years with the Medicare reimbursement formula.

“I applaud you for making high quality health care, the long-term sustainability of Medicare, and health care reform a priority. As you work to bring comprehensive health care reform I urge you to carefully crafted provisions to avoid having a disproportionate impact on Medicare beneficiaries that reside in states like Minnesota.”

Congresswoman Betty McCollum (MN-4) serves on the House Appropriations & Budget Committees.

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